The Cleveland Museum of Art

Press Release

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CMA'S DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM RECEIVES $465,000 GRANT FROM OHIO SCHOOLNET COMMISSION

CLEVELAND — Cleveland Museum of Art Acting Director Kate Sellers announced today a $465,000 grant from the Ohio SchoolNet Commission for the museum's groundbreaking distance learning program. The grant from the Ohio SchoolNet Commission, supported by funds from Ameritech, is the largest the museum has received for a single educational program.

The distance learning program connects the CMA's education department electronically via teleconferencing to classrooms at schools throughout Ohio. Funds from the Ohio SchoolNet grant will be used to support content development and the increasing demand for classes from telecommunities around the state.

Ms. Sellers stated: "We are delighted to receive this grant which will advance our strategic plan to enhance the value of the museum's collections, educational initiatives, and other activities by becoming a national leader in the use of new and emerging technologies. The fact that this is one of the few grants given by Ohio SchoolNet to support content providers makes it a great honor. Our thanks go out to Ohio SchoolNet for selecting the CMA and to Ameritech for its support in our efforts."

Director of the Division of Education and Public Programs Marjorie Williams places her department's emphasis on distance learning within a critical element of her department's strategic plan. According to Ms. Williams: "CMA is one of three national art museums creating distance learning programs. This technology redefines our concept of outreach. Now we can take the museum's collection into any classroom in the state. Children living in rural counties who could never travel to the museum for a field trip can now learn that art is important to their lives. Equally important, students who cannot leave the hospital can be connected to the museum and to fellow students so they don't feel isolated."

The three-year grant will be used to improve the museum's equipment, add staff, and expand the program's curriculum. Year 1 includes the production of curriculum on Egyptian

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art, and chemistry in art. This high school class will be taught from CMA's conservation department by the museum's Chief Conservator, Bruce Christman. The grant provides funds for portable video conferencing equipment so classes can originate from selected areas in the museum like the conservation labs. Year 2 includes the development of elementary curricula on world cultures and science in art, plus the wiring of the exhibition galleries and other areas of the museum. Year 3 will see the development of a high school series, tentatively called "Where in the World?" wherein students will follow the methodologies of an art historian/explorer in identifying and researching discovered treasures.

The CMA's distance learning program began in 1998 with a $95,360 pilot grant from Ameritech to set up and test the distance learning project coined H.E.A.L. (Hospitals Educators Arts Link). The experimental program included the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, the Cleveland Clinic Children's Hospital and over 20 Ohio elementary and high schools in Cleveland, Dayton and Columbus. Live video conference class sessions were produced to over 500 elementary and high school students, as well as patients at the Cleveland Clinic Children's Hospital. This autumn that program continues with classes on Egyptian art, Impressionism, contemporary art and Native American and African art. The Martha Holden Jennings Foundation is also supporting this program with a $25,000 grant made last spring.

The Ohio SchoolNet Telecommunity was established in 1995 through an agreement among the Ohio Department of Education, under which the Ohio SchoolNet Commission was formally administered, the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio and nine Ohio telephone companies—AllTel Ohio and Elyria, Ameritech Ohio, Cincinnati Bell, Chillicothe Telephone, Century Telephone, GTE North Inc., Orwell Telephone, Sprint United, and Western Reserve Telephone. Ameritech provides $3 million annually to the Ohio SchoolNet Commission to provide distance learning grants through the Telecommunity program. More than 85 grants have been given to consortium of both public and state-chartered private and parochial schools across Ohio.

Jacqueline Woods, president of Ameritech Ohio, stated: "We at Ameritech believe this is one of the most innovative ways a telecommunications company can be a good corporate partner of one of the leading educational institutions in its community—extending its resources into the classrooms, and other places for which the museum is out of reach."

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